years. The two major bottlenecks in accepting the proposal of Sankat Mochan Foundation by the Uttar Pradesh Government are as follows:

(i) The proposal involves laying of sewers along the 7 km. length of ghats of Varanasi. This, according to experts, will involve breaking of ghats, which is not only expected to result in endangering the residential buildings and historical monuments close to the ghats, but will also cause of great deal of hardship to bathers and local population.

(ii) It is proposed to construct a Sewage Treatment Plan in the flood plains of river Ganga at Sota about 7 km. downstream of Varanasi. This, again according to experts, is likely to endanger the structures of the treatment plant during high floods and may cause flooding and bank side erosion in the upstream stretches.

Both these proposals were further considered by the Government at the high level meeting on 13th July, 2001 and a view in the matter will be taken shortly.

Review of Forest Conservation Act

669. SHRI ANIL SHARMA: Will the Minister of ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government have received any communications from the State Governments regarding review of the Forest Conservation Act;

(b) if so, which State Government has sent such communications, with the details thereof in each case; and

(c) what action Government have taken or propose to take in the matter?

THE MINISTER OF ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS (SHRI T.R. BAALU): (a) to (c)Yes, Sir. Such specific requests have been received from the States of Maharashtra, Gujarat, Madhya Pradesh and Chhattisgarh. The request relates primarily to delegation of limited powers to State Government to decide small projects and for streamlining the procedures under the said Act to cut short the delay in according forest clearances.

As far as delegation of powers to State Governments is concerned, it requires amendment in the Forest (Conservation) Act, 1980. However, in view of an ongoing public interest litigation WP(C) No. 202/95 in the Supreme Court in

which implementation of this Act by the State Governments is one of the main issues under review, it would not be advisable to amend the Act for the time being.

The Ministry of Environment and Forests has already initiated several measures to streamline the procedures to cut short the delay, which has resulted in expeditious decision on the proposals at the Central Government level. However, State/UT Governments have also important role to play in the effective implementation of the Act including faster clearances. In the past few months, meetings have been held with the Governments of Maharashtra, Madhya Pradesh and Orissa at the highest level where it has emerged that considerable delay is occurring at the State Government level. The matter has been taken up with all State/UT Governments to simplify their procedure for processing and submission of the proposals to the Central Government and early compliance of the stipulated conditions.

Tiger gift by Zoo authorities

670. SHRI C.M. IBRAHIM: Will the Minister of ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS be pleased to state:

(a) whether as reported in the Indian Express dated the 24th April, 2001, under the caption, "No beastly tales at Chhatbir, here tigers are simply gifted away", since the start of the year, 2000, nearly ten tigers have been killed in and out of captivity;

(b) if so, what was the tiger population in India as per last three census and how far the report about killing of tigers is correct; and

(c) whether the tigers are gifted by the Zoo authorities to anybody who will have them; if so, the details of the practices in this regard?

THE MINISTER OF ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS (SHRI T.R. BAALU): (a) and (b) The news item published in the Indian Express dated 24-4-2001 under the caption, "No beastly tales at Chhatbir, here tigers are simply gifted away" has referred to the killing of nearly 100 tigers since the start of the year 2000. During the year 2000, 55 tigers have died in zoos and about 39 tigers have been killed in